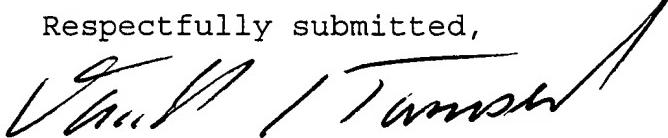


REMARKS

The amendments to Claims 4, 5, 8 and 12-14 are made to eliminate the multiple dependencies and to place the claims in proper U.S. format. In addition, new claims 15 and 16 have been added. The effect of the foregoing amendments relate only to matters of form, and the substance of the claims remain the same. The present amendment is deemed not to add new matter. Claims 1-16 are in the application.

It is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for examination on the merits and early action and allowance thereof is accordingly respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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MARKED-UP VERSION OF AMENDED CLAIMS 4, 5, 8 AND 12-14

Please substitute the amended claims 4, 5, 8, and 12-14 for the original claims 4, 5, 8 and 12-14:

4. (Amended) A microgel as described in [any one of claims 1 through 3] claim 1, wherein the hydrophilic compound capable of forming a gel is one or more hydrophilic compounds selected from the group consisting of agar, carrageenan, curdlan, gelatin, gellan gum, and alginic acid.

5. (Amended) A microgel as described in [any one of claims 1 through 4] claim 1, which has a viscosity of 2,000-1,000,000 mPa.s (B-type viscometer, 25°C).

8. (Amended) An external composition comprising a microgel of [any one of claims 1 through 5] claim 1.

12. (Amended) An external composition as described in [any one of claims 9 through 11] claim 9, wherein the amount of the pharmaceutical ingredient and/or the salt is 0.01-20 mass% of the total of the composition.

13. (Amended) An external composition as described in [any one of claims 8 through 12] claim 8, which is a cosmetic composition.

14. (Amended) An external composition as described in [any one of claims 8 through 12] claim 8, which is a hair dye.